

Archbishop Burke apologizes to fellow US bishops for video comments

WASHINGTON - The prefect of the Supreme Court of the Apostolic Signature issued an apology to his fellow U.S. bishops March 26 for how comments he made in a videotaped interview were used.

The videotape was released to the press in Washington a day earlier by anti-abortion activist Randall Terry.

In the videotaped interview, U.S. Archbishop Raymond L. Burke told Mr. Terry that bishops, priests, deacons and extraordinary ministers of holy Communion should refuse Communion to Catholic politicians who insist on supporting legislation to keep abortion legal, and said U.S. President Barack Obama “could be an agent of death.”

Mr. Terry, 49, founder of the anti-abortion group Operation Rescue, showed the videotaped interview during a press conference, at which time he called for two U.S. bishops to be removed as bishops because he said they had not instructed ordinary and extraordinary ministers to refuse holy Communion to Catholic politicians who support laws that keep abortion legal.

In a statement released in Rome, Archbishop Burke said Mr. Terry told him the videotaped interview, conducted in Rome March 2, would be used to encourage pro-life workers in their cause and had no idea Mr. Terry would be showing it at a press conference.

“Sadly, Mr. Terry has used the videotape for another purpose which I find most objectionable,” he said. “If I had known what the true purpose of the interview was, I would never have agreed to participate in it.”

In the videotaped interview, Archbishop Burke calls on Catholics to voice their objection to their bishops when “they are scandalized” by the giving of holy

Communion to people who are “publicly and obstinately in sin.”

He encouraged them to “go to their pastors, whether it’s their parish priest or to their bishop, to insist that this scandal stop. Because it is weakening the faith of everyone.”

In a March 26 telephone interview to respond to the statement, Mr. Terry told Catholic News Service he had nothing but positive things to say about Archbishop Burke, but also said it was made clear to the archbishop that the videotaped interview would be aired on television and radio.

“In the archbishop’s defense, I didn’t think to tell him I would be distributing a transcript of the interview,” Terry said. “But it was made clear to him that it would be made available to the public.”

In his March 26 statement, Archbishop Burke, head of the St. Louis Archdiocese from January 2004 until his appointment to his Vatican post in June 2008, said he gave the interview as a bishop from the U.S. to encourage those engaged in the respect-life apostolate, and not as prefect of the Supreme Court of the Apostolic Signature.

“I was never informed that the videotape would be used as part of a campaign of severe criticism of certain fellow bishops,” he said. “I am deeply sorry for the confusion and hurt which the wrong use of the videotape has caused to anyone, particularly to my brother bishops.”